



March 13, 2012

SEWARD NEIGHBORHOOD GROUP

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Members of the Redistricting Group:

Seward, one of the few Minneapolis neighborhoods well defined by geographical boundaries, is a strong and cohesive neighborhood that works hard at engaging all its stakeholders in building a strong and vibrant community where everyone can flourish. In the past decade, our efforts at community building have been enhanced greatly by the fact that the neighborhood lies entire within a single ward. This gives Seward stronger representation at the City Council, minimizes the amount of time we spend interacting with elected representatives, and, consequently, maximizes the number of volunteer hours available for engaging the community itself. It is this cohesiveness and sense of community that gives Seward the tools it needs to respond quickly and positively both to opportunities such as facilitating public input into City projects and programs and to tragedies like the horrific slaying at the Seward Market a few years ago.

Seward was divided as a community during Urban Renewal in the late 1960's and through the 1970's into two parts: East Seward, the more affluent and stable area targeted first by city planners for strengthening and relatively minor rehabilitation and West Seward, the less affluent and more blighted area originally slated for wholesale demolition and rebuilding. We have spent decades mending the rift in the community cause by that division.

Now, in your final redistricting plans, you are proposing a return to this division of our neighborhood. By bifurcating Seward into two wards along a residential north-south avenue, so minor that it does not even directly cross Franklin Avenue, this division of the neighborhood between Wards 6 and 2 may well resurrect the east-west ill feelings among residents. Certainly, the division will make it more difficult for the Seward Neighborhood Group to continue its efforts at building community and fostering the growth in cross-cultural experience and appreciation that makes the neighborhood such a great place to live.

For these reasons, at its March 12th meeting, the Executive Committee of the Seward Neighborhood Group reaffirmed its support for the February redistricting plan for Seward and strongly opposed the March redistricting plan that divides the neighborhood. We encourage you to listen as carefully to the voices coming from our neighborhood as you have to the voices from outside it.

Respectfully,

Ben Walen
Co-President
Seward Neighborhood Group

Mike Trdan
Co-President
Seward Neighborhood Group